



STATE SENATOR

# Rosemary McAuliffe

## 2006 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Spring 2006

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**Sen. Rosemary McAuliffe**

represents the 1st Legislative District, which includes Bothell, Mountlake Terrace, Maltby and other parts of Snohomish County. She is the chair of the Senate Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education Committee, and also serves on the Senate Human Services & Corrections Committee.

Dear Neighbors,

This year's 10th-graders were on the minds of every lawmaker as the 2006 legislative session began. They are the first class for which passing the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is a graduation requirement.

The WASL measures how well we are preparing our students for life beyond high school. The message the Legislature sent to students this year was: We believe in you, and we will help get you the resources you need to succeed.

As the chair of the Senate Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education Committee, my number-one priority was to listen to all viewpoints on the WASL, and then put in place a system that will help every student succeed.

After countless conversations with parents, students, teachers and others, that's exactly what the Legislature did. We provided extra money to help children meet academic standards, approved alternative ways for students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, and put in motion a study that will tell us how to knock down barriers to student success.

This was the crowning achievement of a standout — even historic — legislative session, an outstanding one for children and families. In just 59 days, lawmakers made progress on some of Washington's most pressing issues. Among a number of accomplishments, we:

- Increased accessibility to Washington's higher education system.
- Included even more children and low-income adults in the state's low-cost health care program.
- Approved a groundbreaking bill that extends civil rights to Washington's gay and lesbian citizens.
- Improved policies on dealing with known sex offenders.
- Invested in protecting our state's most precious natural resources, including the Columbia River and Puget Sound.
- Reached a balanced compromise for businesses and workers on calculating unemployment insurance benefits.
- Wrote a supplemental state budget that invests in Washington's families while maintaining a healthy reserve balance for costs that we know are coming.

You'll find more highlights from the session inside this newsletter. Thank you for the privilege of representing the 1st Legislative District. Please continue contacting me with your ideas and questions!

Sincerely,

Sen. Rosemary McAuliffe

## Education: Excellence for every student

This session, we expanded opportunities for students at every stage of their education.

### Early learning

Children are born to learn – the greatest brain development occurs in the first three years of life. We invested in our youngest citizens by creating a state Department of Early Learning to better meet the needs of children and families.

Research shows that high-quality early learning opportunities help prepare children to succeed socially and academically. The early learning department will build partnerships to improve the programs available for families, and will disseminate information to parents and communities about preschool and child care options.

### K-12

With the input of students, parents, teachers and others, we took bold steps this session to give every K-12 student the opportunity to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

### Washington Assessment of Student Learning

- Students who have retaken the WASL at least once will have access to a menu of alternative assessments. The alternatives are equal in rigor to the exam, and include: a portfolio of student work; completion of an approved career training program; a grade comparison model; and a set math score on the PSAT, SAT or ACT.
- To better address any obstacles standing between students and academic success, the Legislature created an independent study of the WASL to analyze the characteristics of students who have not passed the test. The study also will investigate additional methods or options for students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

- We dedicated \$28 million for tutoring, plus \$3 million more for math remediation, to help students who are struggling to meet state standards.

It is critical that all children be given an opportunity to graduate with a diploma that opens the door to their future.

### Breakfast program

We devoted an additional \$2 million to the school breakfast program. Children who come to school hungry do not learn well.

### Foster youth education

Children who are placed in foster care deserve the chance to finish their education and get a good start on their adult lives. We passed a bill giving some foster youth access to much-needed state support and transitional services until age 21, so they can become self sufficient.

### Teacher compensation

The supplemental budget includes \$15 million to catch up K-12 employees' cost-of-living adjustments missed when Initiative 732 was not funded in 2003. The budget also funds scholarships to steer teachers into the high-demand subject areas of math, science, special education and bilingual education.

### Higher education

Lawmakers opened the doors to higher education even more by adding nearly 500 enrollment slots at our public colleges and universities, and giving Washington State University Tri-Cities the go-ahead to expand to a four-year school.

We also created a \$4 million Opportunity Grant Program to assist low-income students who are having a difficult time affording work force training.

## Making progress for V

### Cracking down on sex offenders

Washington's system for dealing with sex offenders is viewed as a model for other states. Still, legislators must be vigilant in filling in any existing gaps in our system, and we did just that this session.



As a member of the Senate Human Services & Corrections Committee, it was important to me that we approve measures that didn't just sound tough, but really improved public safety. Gov. Chris Gregoire signed a package of 18 bills in March to protect our children and communities from those who prey. I sponsored two bills focusing on protecting children:

- Senate Bill 6172, which increases penalties for crimes that are often red flags for more serious sex offenses, including possession of child pornography, voyeurism, and using the Internet to "groom" a minor for sexual purposes.
- Senate Bill 6580, which instructs state officials to develop a model policy on notification and safety plans for juvenile offenders who enroll in public schools. This includes distribution of materials to educate our young people on how to protect themselves.



*"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."  
– W.B. Yeats*

# Washington's families and future

## Getting tough on meth

Methamphetamine is taking a dangerous toll on Washington's communities. Children are often the ultimate victims – officials are reporting more and more children put at risk by meth-addicted parents or toxic neighborhood meth labs.

After extensive study by a task force of legislators and law enforcement officials, we approved Senate Bill 6239 to get treatment to those who need it, and give local law enforcement more tools to combat meth and clean up neighborhoods contaminated by meth labs.



be reviewed by the state Office of the Insurance Commissioner to prevent good doctors from being driven out of state by exorbitant insurance premiums.

Finally, we created a program to help owners of small businesses who want to provide health care coverage, but need affordable options. House Bill 2572 makes businesses with 50 or fewer employees who have incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level eligible for premium assistance if the business pays at least 40 percent of the cost of a moderate health care plan.

With this approach, employers will be able to find decent health insurance for about \$90 per month per employee. Employees will pay approximately 20 percent of the premium.

## Ensuring equality for every Washington citizen

After nearly three decades of persistence and hard work, a measure to extend basic civil rights to Washington's gay and lesbian citizens finally gained legislative approval and was signed into law by the governor on Jan. 31.



House Bill 2661 protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation in financial, employment, insurance and housing matters. I was proud to be able to vote for this long-overdue measure. All people are equal under the law.

## Bringing the outdoors into the classroom

In a recent item in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, a fourth-grader was quoted as saying, "I like to play indoors better, because that's where all the electrical outlets are."



In this era of video games and endless hours of television, we must reconnect the younger generation with nature. This session, we approved House Bill 2910 requiring the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to identify environmental education opportunities for students, and evaluate how environmental, natural science, wildlife, forestry and agricultural education programs benefit Washington's families and communities.

Research shows that the hands-on research involved in environmental education promotes curiosity and can improve student academic performance, including that of students in disadvantaged communities who may have few outdoor learning opportunities.



## Encouraging healthy communities

I've joined my fellow legislators in a commitment to provide all Washington children with affordable health care by 2010. This year, the Legislature set aside enough money to add 10,000 more children to the state's Immigrant Children's Health Program.

We also invested in an additional 6,500 slots in the state's Basic Health Plan to reach low-income adults with no health insurance, and earmarked funding to help seniors on a fixed income pay the prescription drug co-pays under the new federal Medicare Part D program.

The Legislature and the governor passed House Bill 2292 to take steps to improve patient safety. The law allows health-care providers to apologize for medical errors without the risk of those statements being used against them in lawsuits. It also requires malpractice insurance rate increases to



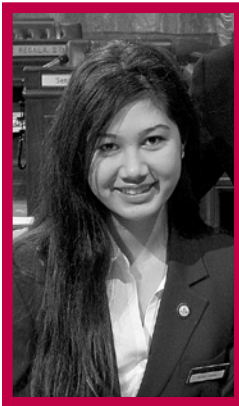


**Students thrive when parents and communities are involved in our schools. This session, the Legislature created resources to increase involvement. We:**

- Provided funding for the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning, an information clearinghouse for information and materials on educational improvement and research.
- Created an education ombudsman office within the governor's office to serve as a resource for parents and children.

In addition, the new special education ombudsman at OSPI is ready to help. The ombudsman provides support to parents, guardians, educators and students with disabilities. Go to: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Ombudsman.aspx>.

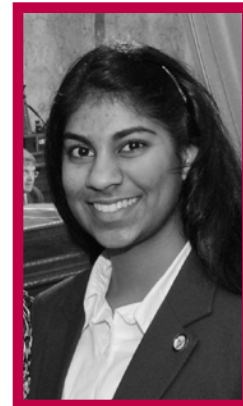
*Thanks to our 2006 legislative pages for their hard work!*



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